Autonomy in tariff hike by Railways

1480. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the views expressed by Mr. Michel Welrave, Chief Executive of the Paris based International Union of Railways in an interview to the "Times of India" on 22nd March, 1996, regarding giving more autonomy to the Railways especially in fixing tariff; and

(b) if so, reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) These are only suggestions of the Chief Executive, International Union of Railways (UIC) and Government has no proposal under consideration for implementation at this stage.

UGC Survey on Higher Education

1481. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the University Grants Commission has surveyed the higher education facilities in the country on a district to district basis;

(b) if so, whether any district has been found to be educationally backward; and

(c) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to increase the educational facilities in such districts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MUHI RAM SAIKIA): (a) to (c) Yes Sir, a committee was set up with the help of NIEPA for preparing a project for developing colleges in each educationally backward district of the country. The Committee identified 150 districts as educationally backward, based on literacy rate and percentage of enrolment of eligible age-group population in 17—23 years in the institutions of higher education. The report is under consideration of the Commission.

Operation Blackboard

1482. SHRI B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the major objectives of the Operation Blackboard;

(b) how far these objectives have been achieved;

(c) whether any shortcomings have been noticed in the implementation of the programme;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps taken by Government to remove these shortcomings?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MUHI RAM SAIKIA): (a) The Operation Blackboard Scheme is intended to provide minimum essential facilities i.e. classrooms, teachers and essential teaching learning material in primary schools to improve the school environment. The Scheme has been expanded to cover upper primary schools with effect from March, 1994.

(b) The objectives of the Scheme have been largely achieved. The major achievements under the Scheme include:—

(i) Provision of 100% central assistance for teaching learning equipments in 5.22 lakh primary schools;

(ii) Sanction of 1.53 lakh teachers for single teacher primary schools;

(iii) Construction of 1.72 lakh classrooms;